According to its MySpace profile, Ninth Letter is a 26-year-old Taurus from Champaign, Ill., with nearly 600 friends. So what's a little fiction – and poetic license – among (literary) friends?

Beyond the world of social networking, in “real life,” Ninth Letter is a mere youngster. But it's growing up fast – and growing its reputation even faster. Now in its fifth year, with 10 issues published, the literary arts journal produced collaboratively by the UI's Creative Writing Program and School of Art and Design receives 3,000 to 4,000 submissions per year. In its short lifetime, the journal has won more than 20 national and international awards.

What makes Ninth Letter so compelling?

“We are a publication that features short stories, essays and poetry in a very highly designed format, in such a way that the graphic design illuminates – rather than just illustrates – and enhances the reading experience,” said editor Jodee Stanley.

When the oversized, image-rich journal first reached magazine racks in 2004, there was nothing quite like it being published by a university program.

“We were pretty much the first,” Stanley said. “The journals that came before us that were experimenting with design – McSweeney's, Zoetrope, Tin House – were all independent journals.”

Ninth Letter is published twice a year, and also has a Web-based component (www.ninthletter.com) curated by art and design professor Joseph Squier. The online content includes a blog as well as original student-produced material, such as videos and podcasts. A recent collaboration with students from the UI theater department featured audio readings of pieces published in the print edition.

While Ninth Letter often features poetry and prose by previously unpublished authors, the journal's authors list has read like a Who's Who of American literature. Best-selling authors Ann Beattie, Dave Eggers, Pulitzer Prize-winners Oscar Hijuelos and Robert Olen Butler, and National Book Award winner and UI professor Richard Powers have been contributors.

The publication's designers, however, are virtual rookies, still in school. Most are undergraduates.

“People who aren’t really familiar with Ninth Letter assume we’re paying designers to make this,” Stanley said. “When they find out it's student designers making this, they're shocked. They just can’t believe this caliber of work is coming out of an undergraduate class.”

Stanley has been managing the journal since its inception in 2003. Its genesis coincided with the establishment, by the university’s English department, of a master of fine arts program in creative writing.

“When the program started, one of the first things students and faculty wanted was to start a literary magazine,” Stanley said. “All the top writing programs have affiliated journals.”

Student Chris Maier took the notion one step further, considering the possibility of an arranged marriage between English and Art and Design.

“I think he basically stalked Joseph Squier,” Stanley joked. Squier, who founded one of the nation’s first online art galleries, is known for his expertise in new and narrative media. Intrigued by Naier’s idea, Squier recruited colleagues Nan Goggin and Jennifer Gunji-Ballsrud to join him in the challenge of churning out the designs for Volume I over the winter break.

After an intensive design session, Gunji-Ballsrud said the faculty team realized that that level of work wasn’t something that could be sustained on a regular basis.

“Immediately after that we realized, OK … how can we make this either part of the curriculum or involve students,” she said.

Because of some transitions taking place in the graphic design program, there were no available graduate students. So Gunji-Ballsrud recruited some of the most talented undergraduates.

“And they proved themselves,” she said. “That’s what was exciting about it.”

Now, each semester, about a dozen students are selected to work on Ninth Letter for course credit.

Undergraduate graphic design students Tirso Gamboa, from left, and Debby Su; graduate student Kelley Reed Black; and professor Jennifer Gunji-Ballsrud review color proofs of the current issue of Ninth Letter for color, image quality and placement, and any design errors that might exist. It is the final step before going to press.
**Ninth Letter**

Continued from page 2

“They’re allowed to take it twice, then I have to cut them off,” Muran said. A notable exception to that rule has been Brett Talbott, a graphic design major from Chilton Park, R.I., who worked on four issues. “It’s just a phenomenal designer absolutely dedicated to Ninth Letter,” Talbott said.

The work itself starts with a lot of reading. Each student must read every manuscript selected for inclusion in the journal. Group members then discuss ideas regarding theme and meaning, and possible visual concepts that might take shape.

They also receive feedback from Stanley, creative writing graduate students who serve as editorial assistants, and Talbott, a senior art director.

“From there, we all assign stories for the issue,” Muran said. “It is common to have such pairings in the group. The students can take a group on a tour across the time and space and work together. A story can be re-written by another student on a team. Each team works on a set of stories that get equal coverage from their de facto clients, the writers or the students themselves.”

“Anastasia was an exceptional design student,” Muran said. “She was the only student in the group on the magazine who was a double major in graphic design and zoology. She was fascinated with wildlife and had a broad understanding of design and its possibilities in the world.”

In 2005, Tumanova created designs to accompany a story about a Chicago woman and her guide on an exploratory expedition through the wilds of the wild. But as the fox recovered, it began to interact with the author’s family. “He never growled at us. He never worried about its future. (Wild animals that cannot be returned to the wild are euthanized, as the clinic lacks the resources to keep them indefinitely.) This approach is more humane than the fate they would face if released.”

The students also participate in events to educate school children and other public groups about native species. The students have started the following: an event to release an owl with an injured wing. There was even a white pelican with a broken wing, in an pouch, in which she was unable to feed its young. The work itself starts with a lot of reading. Each student must read every manuscript selected for inclusion in the journal. Group members then discuss ideas regarding theme and meaning, and possible visual concepts that might take shape.

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The small class was hard-earned, and her marks helped win her a spot on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s n-2830 English Derangement, an annual competition in which students scramble words to create poems. Wilson recently won the competition.

"It's something I've been working on for a long time," Wilson said. "It was just something I really enjoyed doing, and I thought it would be a great opportunity to get involved in something that I love.

The competition is open to students of any major, and the winning submission is published in the University’s literary magazine, the Illinois Review. This year’s winner was a poem entitled "The Tale of Two Cities," by Jameson Henry.

In addition to the writing and poetry competitions, the Writing Center also offers workshops and tutorials on various topics, such as grammar, spelling, and citation styles. Students can drop in for one-on-one appointments or attend group sessions to receive feedback on their work.

The Writing Center is located in room 230 of the Illini Union. For more information, visit the Writing Center’s website at writingcenter.illinois.edu or call (217) 333-2120.
UI career counselors offer tips for finding work in a tough market

By Jan Dennis

UI career counselors offer tips for finding work in a tough market. Their advice is based on a report that shows that nearly 9,200 graduates will be hired in 2009 with 2008 production. Counseling and assistance to students campuswide. "I think you can look at it from the long view. I think there will be jobs, it just might take a little longer, and graduates may have to adjust their standards, but there are jobs out there."

"Our reputation brings opportunities," said Sarah Milne, a dietitian for Dining Services. "We met to organize the Gluten Free Challenge last October. We are introducing gluten-free options in dining halls around campus last October."

For one, no one is sure whether an expected surge in baby boomer retirements may be delayed by market-related factors. For another, no one is sure whether an expected surge in baby boomer retirements may be delayed by market-related factors. For one, no one is sure whether an expected surge in baby boomer retirements may be delayed by market-related factors.

"We are trying to get our recipes accurate and up to date so the nutrition professionals will be ready for new food that is gluten-free," said Milne. "We are trying to get our recipes accurate and up to date so the nutrition professionals will be ready for new food that is gluten-free."
McFarland Memorial Bell Tower to be dedicated on Quad

By Phil Ciciora

Come spring, the chimes of the Altgeld Bell Tower will have its grand opening and dedication later this semester. Born and bred between the ACES Library, Information and Alumni Center to the east and Temple Buoye Bell Hall to the west on the university’s grid, the small bell tower, also known as a carillon, was funded by a $1.5 million gift from the estate of Carol McFarland in memory of her husband, Sarah “Sally” McFarland, who died of ovarian cancer in 2005.

“Both my wife and I love music,” McFarland said, “and we wanted to do something special for the university, a carillon in the perfect way to honor her memory.”

The university’s other carillon also inspired McFarland.

“I think anyone who’s gone to the UI has heard the chiming of Altgeld and can remember what a relaxing feeling that was,” he said. “Music can take your mind off of work for a few minutes.”

A carillon is a set of stationary bells usually clustered in a tower and played either by a carillonneur with a keyboard and foot pedal or an automated mechanism similar to that of a player piano. The McFarland Memorial Bell Tower will have 500 pre-programmed songs and a remote keyboard open to students who wish to hear other music. (Unlike the popular video game “Guitar Hero,” the carillon requires musical knowledge on the part of the user.)

The new tower’s “quartet,” derived from the Old Church “quintet,” which means the “aol of four bells.” The McFarland Memorial Bell Tower, however, will have consideration than the four bells. In fact, it will have 49 bronze bells arranged in musical staff-like, by carillonneur, Brian Stauffer.

Each bell was cast in the Netherlands, shipped to a foundry in Cincinnati, and then transported on several semi-trailers to Central Illinois last fall. The heaviest bell weighs about 5,000 pounds.

“The bell, McFarland said that alumni Fred Godfrey, a renowned Louis-based architect in the firm Peckham, designed his time to design a tower uniquely suited to the campus.

“Fred and I looked at a couple hundred parishes of carillons throughout the world,” McFarland said, “but we decided we didn’t want to copy anyone else’s tower. We wanted something that matched the university’s personality and would fit in with the other buildings on campus.”

The tower’s brick exterior echoes the style of buildings found on the main quad, and its alignment with the south-north axis of campus already has made it a landmark of the South Quad. The same site the Illini Union and Fieldhouse Ahmad is on the main quad.

With a little help from the colleges of Time and Applied Arts and ACES, the area surrounding the tower will be landscaped with walkways leading up to the base, creating an inviting destination for students to meet, relax, study and reflect.

“It’s exciting to see it rising above everything,” McFarland said. “It makes me want to look up at the sky and enjoy the beauty of nature and the surrounding campus.”

McFarland envisions the tower becoming a campus meeting place that will host weddings, receptions, concerts and other public gatherings.

“I think there will be a lot of people who will be able to enjoy it,” he said.

Ray B. Curry, a senior in art education from Warrenville, Ill., wasselected at first bell tower, but now thinks that “looks cool” and is a worthy addition to the campus.

Samantha E. Salazar, a junior in accounting from Carbondale, Ill., believes the new bell tower adds some much-needed character to the South Quad. Salazar, who will be a senior while you’re playing Frisbee on the South Quad, but think the bell tower will be something that will attract more people.

“Before I actually turn on the bells, I will have it on for a few moments,” Salazar said.

“When I meet with my study groups from class bell will be a nice place to hang across town when it’s nice outside.”

Salazar said the bell tower, which has been buzzing on the since the bells were installed last fall, doubles as an alarm clock for dorm students.

“Sometimes I’ll hear it in the middle of class,” she said. “It wakes you up a little fast.”

Timothy J. Racine, a freshman in chemical engineering from Lovington, Ill., thinks the new bell tower adds something “like something from ‘Lord of the Rings’” but said he intends to visit after it officially opens.

“Right now the South Quad doesn’t have much,” Racine said.

“The new tower makes it a little more noticeable.”

McFarland has been humbled by the overwhelmingly positive response his monument to his wife has received from the campus community.

“I’m hoping this will inspire other people to make their mark on the university as well,” he said.

Technology changing communication with students

By Sharon Forman

T
oday’s students are tech-savvy, and to capture their attention Illinois uses a variety of digital media – YouTube, micro-blogging, instant messages and blogs – in addition to print publications, fan and other traditional venues to recruit them.

On Sept. 1, the Office of Admissions initiated a new Web site based upon Web 2.0 principles – it’s interactive and encourages visitors to be creative and to communicate with each other. Site visitors can view campus photos, watch videos and post messages to the message board for feedback from current students and/or admissions counselors.

Admissions’ YouTube site – www.youtube.com/illinoisadmissions – has about 240 videos for prospective students, some of which are in e-mail “e-card,” video “Why Do You Belong at Illinois?” Snippets of the videos are also used in print publications.

At www.oar.uiuc.edu/future/belong, visitors can customize a copy of the electronic view books, the recruiting brochure that provide overviews of academic programs and campus life along with comments from current and non-current students. Visitors will also be able to choose from a variety of profiles, and they can customize their own version of the view book by adding graphics and features numerous students talking about the university experience.

“We have a very young, dynamic group in the Office of Communications for Enrollment Services that produces our publications for us,” said Keith Marshall, associate provost for enrollment management, who oversaw both the Office of Admissions and the Office of the Registrar. “They’re young, they’re computer savvy and the graphic design and the writing so it has the right look and feel for

students. What we’ve learned over the years is that students want to hear the stories from their peers. They do want to hear it from an authentic source of information.

We go to great lengths to try and meet them on their own terms and to have their peers telling them about the university, rather than us telling the story for them.”

Site visitors can vicariously experience “A Day in the Life” of students at Illinois through a video diary that’s typical day for 10 students in various academic programs. In the videos, which is a montage alumni and player- and past and present typical lecture class, to their jobs at WJTL and at a dining hall, to recreational activities and to campus resources such as the La Casa Cultural Latino and Kowart Art Museum.

Additionally, seven students are sharing their experiences at Illinois through blogs on the Admissions Web site, are four admissions counselors. Site visitors can sort the blog posts by 10 predetermined topics to locate the information that most interests them.

“We began using the blogs (in 2007),” said Stacy Kurlut, director of undergraduate admissions. “It’s a friendly way for students and their parents to ask questions anonymously. We don’t do it with the students write, and we respond to every post. The posts by admissions counselors have 2,000-3,000 entries. We’ve made the site something that students can continue to use throughout the college selection process, and we’re constantly updating and steering it based on the feedback that we receive,” Kurlut said.

“They want us to see what it’s like for them, to help them deal with the thing as everyone else. A lot of our competitors have an us on what we’re doing.”

In August, admissions activated a customer relations management system called Talis,Domenico, which staff members use to track every interaction with prospective students and to personalize communications with them. Talis enables the admissions counselors who are assigned to every U.S. state, county and high school – to go to the and view information about the student’s interests and every previous contact with them, whether it was a phone call, a letter or a conversation at a college fair.

Talis may be rolled out to other campus units in order to coordinate recruitment efforts campuswide. “We’ll be able to see who’s talking to whom and make sure we’re not over-reaching with a student with material,” Marshall said.

“I think it’s going to be an exciting way to change the dynamic and add that personal touch. We’re trying very hard to personalize communications, which is challenging when you have 100,000 transcripts annually for current and former students. Director Paul Kurlut is exploring technologies to deliver documents electronically that also ensure authenticity and immediacy and that would eliminate use of paper forms and manual data entry.

Additionally, Facility Management and Housing, within the registrar’s office, schedules about 110,000 events each year, including Registered Student Organization events, classes and sorority meetings, produced the Course Catalog and the Class Schedule and collaborates across campus to ensure classroom space is in line with institutional goals.

Illinois was one of a few major universities organized with the admissions and registrar functions to become an Office of the Registrar, which has several units.

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Improved interaction with housing directors now paws-ible

By Katrina Rutt

Kathy Caten has one of the shortest commutes on campus. After she locks her office door, she walks five steps to the front door of her apartment on the first floor of Barton and Lundgren halls, part of the Gregory Dove residence hall complex in Champaign. Her office and her apartment share a common wall.

Living in a residence hall as a professional is not for everyone, but Caten loves it. And now University Housing has made the arrangement a bit more appealing. Caten can keep a Florida Keys beach home.

“We want Illinois students to be mentored and supported by the very best staff we can find,” says Jan Bonney, director of residential life for Barton and Lundgren halls, Turner Hall.

“When we meet an individual as committed as we are to creating a community where every person learns and grows, we want that person to work for Illinois.”

Living on campus keeps the master’s-level staff near students and very accessible. Living so close to work involves a few trade-offs, Bonney said.

“We try to make the home environment as appealing as we can to attract the most qualified and enthusiastic professionals. Guidelines keep apartments from becoming mensaeries, and the mentor’s job to take exceptional care of their pets, including cleaning up outdoors and making sure the pets do not become a problem for the neighbor’s community. The apartment dwellers do their much more to keep the staff happy, however.

“Too no as many of our students when I’m out walking my poodle, Jackson,” Caten said. “They can have a pre-nice snack, and then they take a moment to put his back or roll his belly, and it just turns their day around.” Students who probably wouldn’t have stopped in an office for advice open up and share, and in taking a moment to talk, they connect to the community.

“I don’t have to come home to an empty house,” said Thomas Walck, assistant director at Turner Hall, one of the Illinois Street residence halls in Urbana. “And my dog gives me a way to interact with my residents that I didn’t have before. They’ll approach me to ask about Lady.”

Arianna Aragon, whose pug – a pop-beagle mix – was rescued from the local humane society, agreed.

“Having a pet has allowed me to get to know residents that I couldn’t otherwise know. Every time I am walking Jasper around Squinty Hall (one of the buildings in the Gregory Dove residence halls in Urbana),” students will stop me to play with him. This gives me a chance to get to know them, ask questions, introduce myself, and build a relationship with them.”

“When I’m walking Kruz,” said C.J. Blumenstein of Farmer Hall (one of the Gregory Dove residence halls in Champaign), “students come up to me and ask to pet her. We get a chance to talk about their pet’s home and life outside of classes.

“When our students move homes, they miss not only their parents and siblings,” Bonney said. “A pet is often an important part of the family, too.”

Of the 17 resident directors in the undergraduate residence halls, six share their apartments with pets. Dogs prove to be very popular: So far one director has chosen to keep a cat.

Katrina Caten, resident director for Barton and Lundgren halls, loves sharing her campus apartment with Jackson, her standard poodle. She credits him with helping her campus apartment with Jackson, her standard poodle. She credits him with helping

Top left: Tom Lees, manager of the Facilities and Services Maintenance Fund, with students to retrofit 10 other buildings on the list, including Browning Hall, Peace Hall, Power Hall, and Butler Hall. The proposed work would include replacing some deteriorating fixtures and installing occupancy sensors in addition to replacing T-12 lamps and ballasts with energy-efficient T-8 lamps and ballasts with energy-efficient T-8 lamps and ballasts to use less energy for the 10 buildings would be about $120,000, based upon 12 hours’ usage daily.

When completed in May, the Lighting Retrofit Project is expected to save the campus more than $1 million annually in energy costs.

F&S also is moving ahead with retro-commissioning projects that will help buildings operate more efficiently with upgrades to mechanical ventilation, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems as well as other building systems. During the past year, the retro-commissioning team has completed upgrades in the 1862 Library, Newcomb Civil Engineering Building, Kerr Hall, Center for the Performing Arts.

The total project budget is $4.8 million, and a $1.2 million grant from the nonprofit Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation is funding work on about 20 of the 44 buildings on the list and 97 percent of the largest energy users on campus.

Administration may obtain another $1.8 million, possibly from the Academic Facilities Maintenance Fund, directed specifically for students, to retrofit 10 other buildings on the list, including Browning Hall, Peace Hall, Power Hall, and Butler Hall. The proposed work would include replacing some deteriorating fixtures and installing occupancy sensors in addition to replacing T-12 lamps and ballasts with energy-efficient T-8 lamps and ballasts with energy-efficient T-8 lamps and ballasts to use less energy for the 10 buildings would be about $120,000, based upon 12 hours’ usage daily.

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During the past year, the retro-commissioning team has completed upgrades in the 1862 Library, Newcomb Civil Engineering Building, Kerr Hall, Center for the Performing Arts, the National Soybean Research Center and Turner Hall, with estimated savings to the university of more than $875,000 annually.

F&S plans to spend about two-thirds of its funding for deferred maintenance projects on other capital construction projects, including classroom renovations and heating, ventilation and air conditioning system replacements. F&S continues to investigate ways to reduce campus energy consumption and the carbon footprint, including the adoption of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards on large building projects and an awareness campaign.

Last year, Chancellor Richard L. Herman established goals of reducing the energy consumption of existing buildings by 10 percent over the next three years and rolling back usage to 1990 standards within five years. In February 2008, Herman pledged that the campus would achieve climate neutrality by joining more than 4,600 institutions in signing the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. Additionally, Herman and Provost Linda Katehi adopted the Energy Policy for the Illinois Campus in mid-2007, which aims to aggressively reduce energy consumption and costs, diminish greenhouse gas emissions and shift energy generation to renewable resources.

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Lauren Hugings

Serves as part-time director of the Office of Postgraduate Scholarships, assisting UI students and recent alumni in preparing and applying for nationally competitive awards, such as Rhodes, Truman and Fulbright scholarships.

A team of U. of I. accounting students has won a national competition sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the world’s largest professional services firm. The members of the U. of I. team are juniors Julie Buhnerkempe, of Effingham, Ill.; Jared Marchiando, of Aurora, Ill.; and Adam West, of Harrisburg, Ill. They were the youngest in the finals in New York City, which required students to solve complex, real-world accounting and auditing problems.

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Dear Parents,

Without a doubt, wherever you are reading this, financial anxiety currently permeates your days. The credit crunch, foreclosures, rising unemployment and layoffs, and shrinking retirement accounts are part of our everyday vernacular. The University of Illinois is by no means immune from the economic downturn. Although our Brilliant Futures campaign has reached more than 70 percent of its goal in a little over a year, our endowment has decreased markedly over the course of one year. This means less available money for our programs; less money to educate Illinois’ young men and women.

Indeed this recession has also made it more difficult for parents to send their children to college. Perhaps you wonder as we do: Will there be money left in the federal treasury to honor this year’s 10 percent increase in federal aid applications?

I cannot deny that the year ahead will be painful at Illinois and involve critical choices that will not be popular choices. But I also see this university standing at the threshold of opportunity, especially given the proposed federal investments.

I have personally experienced this situation twice before – once here, once elsewhere – and on each occasion I saw a stronger institution emerge. This is possible again if the answers to the financial questions we face are grounded in sound institutional principles and values. We will find ways to respond to our financial circumstances that build on our accomplishments of recent years, allow us to continue our forward movement, and protect our missions of teaching, research, economic development and public engagement.

Guided by the campus’ strategic plan, we developed a shared vision for this institution that requires us to:

• Assure student access to a quality education across all income levels
• Safeguard the quality of our faculty and the education we offer
• Secure the base of excellence for which we are justly known – our research activities and related engagement with the public
• Preserve our capacity to selectively invest in high-potential endeavors.

Our core values also include promoting bold ideas and taking on the most pressing issues of our times. It is not so hard to trace back many of our successes to investments that took risk and that exemplified our agility. Arguably, opportunity, not necessity, is the mother of invention. Eureka moments grow out of a free flow of ideas across a multi-disciplinary atmosphere, and I believe we must do everything in our power not only to maintain that creative environment but also to enhance those opportunities.

In summary, this is a moment of time in which we will stay committed to quality – quality in each and every decision we make. Because we are Illinois, we will not march in place. We will choose to move forward toward a future less bound by the present and the past, while, at the same time, adhering to the bold values that so define Illinois. Our students – your sons and daughters – and this great university deserve no less.

Thank you for your continued support,

Sincerely,

Richard H. Herman

Spring 2009